

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8819

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PK

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF SHERPAO

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM CONSUL, PESHAWAR:

SUMMARY: FRONTIER STILL IN STATE OF FERMENT FIVE DAYS AFTER SHERPAO'S DEATH WITH PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY HOLDING PROCESSIONS AND DEMANDING REVENGE AGAINST NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY FOR ITS ALLEGED ROLE IN ASSASSINATION. DENYING THAT THEIR PARTY HAD ROLE IN KILLING, NAP SYMPATHIZERS NOTE THERE THERE WERE NAP STUDENT LEADERS IN ROOM WITH SHERPAO AT TIME OF EXPLOSION. PROVINCIAL PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY HAS BEEN WEAKENED BY SHERPAO'S DEATH. IT IS RUMORED THAT EITHER FORMER GOVERNOR ASLAM KHATTAK OR CENTRAL INTERIOR MINISTER QAIYUM WOULD BECOME LEADER OF PRO-BHUTTO FORCES IN FRONTIER. SHERPAO'S ASSASSINATION HAS MADE PEOPLE FEEL MORE INSECURE AND THERE IS WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT THERE WILL BE INCREASE OF VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED. END SUMMARY.

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1. ON FIFTH DAZSOF MOURNING FOR NWFP SENIOR MINISTER AND PPP LEADER HAYAT SHERPAO, IDAJOR CITIES AND TOWNS IN FRONTIER REMAIN IN STATE OF FERMENT. PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY SUPPORTERS ARE CONTINUING TO HOLD DAILY PROCESSIONS WHILE DEMANDING REVENGE AGAINST NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY FOR ITS ALLEGED HORDER OF FALLEN PPP LEADER. PROCESSIONISTS HAVE ALREADY ATTACKED AND DAMAGED THE OFFICE HEADQUARTERS OF BOTH THE NAP AND THE JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI AND HAVE RANSACKED SHOPS AND LAW OFFICES OF PROMINENT NAP LEADERS. REPORTS REACHING CONSULATE INDICATE THAT OVER 500 NAP SUPPORTERS AND SYMPATHIZERS, INCLUDING ALMOST ALL FRONTIER MPA'S, MNA'S AND SENATORS AND ABOUT 100 STUDENT LEADERS, HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN THIS PROVINCE ALONE. ESTIMATES VARY, BUT MANY HUNDREDS OF OTHER NAP SUPPORTERS FROM SETTLED AREAS OF PROVINCE HAVE REPORTEDLY FLED TO TRIBAL AREAS AND TO AFGHANISTAN.

2. ALMOST ALL GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS IN PROVINCE - WHETHER IN PPP OR IN MUSLIM LEAGUE - REMAIN BITTER AND ANGRY ABOUT SHERPAO'S ASSASSINATION. THEY ARE IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT'S LINE THAT THE NAP, IN COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN, WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATH. NAP SYMPATHIZERS AND MANY INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, DISPUTE THIS CHARGE AND SAY THAT IF NAP MEMBERS WERE CULPRITS, WHY WERE THERE SO MANY NAP STUDENTS PRESENT IN ROOM WHEN EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE WHICH KILLED SHERPAO. NAP SUPPORTERS AND PPP LEADERS ALIKE ARE IN AGREEMENT JSAPT SOME OF EVENTS WHICH PRECEDEB SAHV BODIYV QNON. IT IS ACCEPTED BY BOTH CAMPS THAT IN WEEKS PRIOR TO KILLING, SHERPAO HAD BEEN PURSUING POLICY OF CONCILIATION WITH ELEMENTS OF NAP, AND ESPECIALLY WITH NAP STUDENT LEADERS WHO HAD WON UNIVERSUY OF PESHAWAR ELECTIONS LAST FALL. GROWING RAPPORT BETWEEN SHERPAO AND NAP STUDENT LEADERS HAD RESULTED IN PPP LEADER'S PARTICIPATION IN NUMBER OF UNIVERSITY AND LOCAL COLLEGE CEREMONIES CULMINATING IN UNIVERSITY HISTORY DEPARTMENT CEREMONY INSTALLING STUDENT OFFICE HOLDERS IN THEIR NEW POSITIONS. WHEN EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE, NUMBER OF UNIVERSITY'S MORE PROMINENT NAP STUDENT LEADERS WERE SITTCB IN FRONT ROWS OF CHAIRS ONLY FEW YARDS FROM SHERPAO. (COMMENT: SOME OF THOSE WHO ARE CONVINCED THAT NAP AND AFGHANS CAUSED SHERPAO'S DEATH SAY THAT AJMAL KHATTAK AND HIS FRIENDS IN KABUL WOULD HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT KILLING SOME NAP STUDENTS WHILE INSURING LIQUIDATION OF SHERPAO.)

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3. IN ASSESSING POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SHERPAO'S DEATH IN NWFP, ALL POLITICAL OBSERVERS SEEM TO BE IN AGREEMENT THAT THE NAP HAS SUFFERED GRIEVOUS LOSS. SHERPAO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN VERY DYNAMIC OR POPULAR LEADER BUT AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF FAIRLY INTENSIVE POLITICKING ON BEHALF OF PPP HE HAD ACHIEVED SOME PROMINENCE FOR HIMSELF AND THE PROVINCIAL PARTY. WITH HIS DEPARTURE THE PROVINCIAL PPP IS LEFT WITHOUT ANYONE WHO COULD

EVEN REMOTELY BE EXPECTED TO FILL HIS SHOES. PRIMIN BHUTTO MAY BE THINKING OF UTILIZING CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR, A RECENT RECRUIT TO PPP, AS PARTY LEADER ON TEMPORARY BASIS, BUT GANDAPUR HAS NEITHER THE TALENT NOR DESIRE TO WORK AT STRENGTHENING THE PARTY IN THE PROVINCE. OTHER POSSIBILITIES BEING TALKED ABOUT ARE FORMER GOVERNOR ASLAM KHATTAK (NOW AMBASSADOR IN TEHRAN) AND CENTRAL INTERIOR MINISTER QAIYUM. ASLAM KHATTAK MIGHT BE GOOD CHOICE BUT IS PROBABLY NOT WILLING TO BE AS COMPLETELY SUBSERVIENT TO BHUTTO AS WAS SHERPAO. ALSO, ASLAM KHATTAK WOULD PREFER TO TAKE A MORE CONCILIATORY APPROACH TO THE NAP THAN PRIMIN WOULD WISH. SELECTION OF QAIYUM TO LEAD PRO-BHUTTO FORCES IN PROVINCE WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS SIGNALING THE INTRODUCTION OF A POLICY AIMED AT THE COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF NAP. QAIYUM WOULD ALSO BE EXPECTED, NOW THAT HE IS COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING MUSLIM LEAGUE AS SEPARATE ENTITY, TO UNDERMINE PPP AS PARTY AND TO MAKE PRIMIN COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON MUSLIM LEAGUE FOR HIS SUPPORT IN NWFP. (QAIYUM'S NAME, INCIDENTLY, HAS BEEN VERY MUCH ON PEOPLE'S LIPS DURING PAST FEW DAYS BECAUSE HE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE GAINED POLITICALLY MORE THAN ANYONE FROM SHERPAO'S DEATH. RUMORS - INSPIRED NO DOUBT PARTLY BY THE NAP - HAVE SUGGESTED THAT HE ARRANGED FOR SHERPAO TO BE MURDERED.)

4. ONE OF THE MORE SIGNIFICANT CONSEQUENCES OF SHERPAO'S ASSASSINATION FOR THE FRONTIER HAS BEEN THE WIDESPREAD SENSE OF UNEASE AND FOREBODING IT HAS CAUSED AMONG PEOPLE IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE. MANY PERSONS ARE NOW AFRAID FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY AND THERE HAS DEVELOPED AN ALL-PERVADING FEELING THAT LIFE IN THE FRONTIER WILL NOW BE CHARACTERIZED BY MORE VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED. THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED TO IMPLEMENT HARSH AND REPRESSIVE LAWS AIMED AT CRUSHING THE NAP, AND THE NAP IN TURN IS EXPECTED TO BECOME AN OPENLY VIOLENT ORGANIZATION, COOPERATING MORE CLOSELY WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN.

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Message Attributes

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